

Republicans and Democrats agree that the Afghanistan war wasn't worth it

By LINLEY SANDERS and
REBECCA SANTANA
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — At a time when Americans are deeply divided along party lines, a new poll shows considerable agreement on at least one issue: The United States' two-decade-long war in Afghanistan was not worth fighting.

The poll from the Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research comes two years after the U.S. pulled out of Afghanistan in August 2021 and the Taliban returned to power. The war was started to go after the masterminds of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and the Taliban who allowed them to use Afghan territory. It ended in frantic scenes of Afghans and Americans desperately trying to get on one of the last flights out of Kabul.

Continued on Page 2



U.S. soldiers and Afghan security forces search the site where a suicide attacker rammed a car bomb into a NATO convoy killing two foreign civilian contractors, in the Afghan capital Kabul, Afghanistan, Feb. 10, 2014.

Associated Press
Page 2

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Republicans and Democrats agree that the Afghanistan war wasn't worth it



A caisson carrying the casket containing the remains of Army Sgt. 1st Class Andrew T. Weathers proceeds to the burial service at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Va., Oct. 17, 2014.

Associated Press

Continued from Front

Polls suggest the withdrawal, seen by many as chaotic and ill-planned, may have been a turning point for President Joe Biden's approval ratings, which started a downward slide around that time and have not recovered since.

Two-thirds of Americans say the war in Afghanistan was not worth fighting; 65% of Democrats and 63% of Republicans agree on that evaluation. Many have doubts about how successful the U.S. was at accomplishing more specific goals such as eliminating the threat from extremists or improving opportunities for women.

"It was unwinnable from the beginning," said Martin Stefen, a 78-year-old Republican who lives in Carson City, Nevada. He said the U.S. should have paid closer attention to what happened to the Soviet Union, which waged a decade-long war in Afghanistan during the 1980s only to pull out in defeat in 1989. And, he said, the U.S. should have had a more specific end goal for how it wanted the war in Afghanistan to go and a better

understanding of the country's tribal politics.

That thought was echoed by Justin Campbell, a 28-year-old Democrat from Brookhaven, Mississippi. He said it was clear after the U.S. was entrenched in Afghanistan that it didn't have very deep support. Campbell said he's not pleased that the Taliban is back in control.

"But I don't think it was worth us staying over there," he said.

Maliha Chishti, a lecturer and research associate at the Pearson Institute, said she was struck by the fact that after 20 years of war, so many American and Afghan lives lost and billions spent, the vast majority said they felt Afghanistan was not friendly to the U.S. or was an outright enemy. She said the responses demonstrate a frustration on the part of Americans and the need to ask questions about what went wrong with America's attempts to intervene in Afghanistan.

"We invested all of this money to really build a state from scratch and when we left, that state completely collapsed," she said.

Many Americans also say the United States was not

successful with many of its key objectives in Afghanistan.

Eliminating the threat from Islamic extremists in Afghanistan during the war is still seen as an important goal by many across party lines: 46% of Democrats and 44% of Republicans called that highly important. But only about one-quarter in each group said this successfully happened during the war.

Slightly fewer than half — 46% — say the U.S. and its allies were successful at the goal of apprehending or killing the individuals in Afghanistan who were responsible for the Sept. 11 attacks, compared with 25% who think the U.S. was unsuccessful in achieving that goal.

Only about one in five Americans say the U.S. successfully improved opportunities for women and girls in Afghanistan, with 43% saying such efforts were unsuccessful. But many said advancing the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan was important to them. About three quarters said that goal was extremely, very or somewhat important to them. Those figures are similar to the

level of support for the goal of eliminating the threat of Islamic extremists sheltering in Afghanistan.

Since the Taliban's return to power, they have restricted women's rights to education and work and even barred them from public parks.

Women were more likely than men across party lines to call advancing the rights of women in Afghanistan an important goal. Toni Dewey, a 75-year-old Democrat from Wilmington, North Carolina, said she wasn't sure how much the U.S. could do at this point to improve the rights of women in Afghanistan but she did feel their educational opportunities were greater while America was there.

"I think any population that doesn't respect their population, they're missing out because women do contribute to the benefit of everyone," she said.

Even as Democrats and Republicans have similar views on policy goals for Afghanistan, they differ on whether the U.S. should take a more active role in solving the world's problems: 55% of Republicans say the U.S. should take a

less active role, compared with 15% of Democrats. The responses also demonstrate the ongoing shift in the Republican Party, which has traditionally been more hawkish and interventionist. Nola Sayne, a 59-year-old Republican from Loganville, Georgia, said she is "wary of the United States being the world's police." Up until quite recently she had been supportive of policies limiting American involvement abroad — like the war in Ukraine — to instead focus American attention and funding at home. But the Hamas attack on Israel, which took place after the poll was conducted, is making her rethink that position.

"They are our friends, our allies. We can't let this heinous act go unanswered," she said.

When it came to general awareness about issues related to the war in Afghanistan, the poll shows 68% of U.S. adults had heard at least some about the U.S. withdrawal; 59% said the same about the Taliban taking control in 2021; and 64% about the Taliban's restrictions on women.

But fewer had heard about the treatment by the Taliban of Afghan citizens who worked with the United States during the war; 52% had heard a lot or some information while 47% said they had heard little or not a thing.

Mike Mitchell is executive director of No One Left Behind, which helps Afghans who worked with the U.S. relocate. He said the poll results echo what his organization has noted anecdotally: Many Americans are surprised to learn that so many Afghans who worked with U.S. troops were left behind. He said Americans are inundated with information from crisis after crisis around the world. And he said when people learn about the problems Afghan allies are having, they want to help.

"At the end of the talk, so many people came up and said: 'I had no idea. ... What can we do about it?'" Mitchell said. □

GOP's Jim Jordan fails again to win vote to become House speaker and colleagues seek other options

By LISA MASCARO, FAR-NOUSH AMIRI and STEPHEN GROVES

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican Rep. Jim Jordan failed again Wednesday on a crucial second ballot to become House speaker, the hard-fighting ally of Donald Trump losing even more GOP colleagues who are refusing to give him the gavel.

Next steps were highly uncertain as angry, frustrated Republicans looked at other options. A bipartisan group of lawmakers floated an extraordinary plan — to give the interim speaker-pro-tempore, Rep. Patrick McHenry, R-N.C., more power to reopen the immobilized House and temporarily conduct routine business.

What was clear was that Jordan's path to become House speaker was almost certainly lost. He was opposed by 22 Republicans, two more than he lost in first round voting the day before. No further votes Wednesday were scheduled. "We'll keep talking to members, keep working on it," Jordan, a founding member of the hard-right Freedom Caucus, said after the vote, vowing to stay in the race.

The House came to another abrupt standstill, stuck now 15 days without a speaker — a position of power second in line to the presidency — since the sudden ouster of Kevin McCarthy. Once a formality in Congress, the vote for House speaker has devolved into another bitter GOP showdown for the gavel.

As Republicans upset and exhausted by the infighting retreated for private conversations, hundreds of demonstrators amassed outside the Capitol over the Israel-Hamas war, a stark reminder of the concern over having the House adrift as political challenges intensify at home and abroad.

Ahead of Wednesday's vote, Jordan, the combative Judiciary Committee



Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, talks with members as the House convenes for a second day of balloting to elect a speaker, at the Capitol in Washington, Wednesday, Oct. 18, 2023. Former Speaker Rep. Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., looks on at right.

Associated Press

chairman, made an unusual plea for party unity — almost daring his colleagues to put forward the alternative proposal for a temporary speaker.

"We've been at this two weeks," Jordan said at the Capitol. "American people deserve to have their government functioning."

But as the rollcall got underway, he lost more than he gained, picking up three backers but adding more detractors.

The holdouts added to a surprisingly large and politically diverse group of 20 Republicans who had rejected Jordan's nomination the day before, many resenting the hardball tactics seeking to enforce support, and viewing the Ohio congressman as too extreme for a central seat of U.S. power.

With Republicans in majority control of the House, 221-212, Jordan must pick up most of his GOP foes to win. Wednesday's tally, with 199 Republicans voting for Jordan and 212 for Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York, left no candidate with a clear majority, as the 22 Republicans voted for someone else.

One new Jordan opponent, Rep. Vern Buchanan of Florida, explained

his vote, "I think it's time to move on."

Bipartisan groups of lawmakers have been floating ways to operate the House by giving greater power to McHenry or another temporary speaker. The House had never ousted its speaker before McCarthy, and McHenry could tap the temporary powers that were created after the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks to ensure continuity of government.

The novel concept of boosting the interim speaker's role was gaining favor with a pair of high-profile Republicans: Former GOP speakers Newt Gingrich and John Boehner.

Gingrich said while he likes Jordan, he has "no faith" the nominee can get much beyond the 200 votes he won in the first vote.

"We can't sit around and suck our thumbs and hope the world will wait until the House Republicans get their act together," Gingrich told Fox News' Sean Hannity on his show.

Boehner reposted Gingrich's views saying, "I agree," on social media.

The two men have deep experience with the subject. Both were chased to early retirement.

"The Republicans are un-

able to function right now," Jeffries said late Tuesday.

"All options are on the table to end the Republican civil war," he added Wednesday. In nominating Jordan, veteran Republican Rep. Tom Cole of Oklahoma said it was time to end the upheaval that he had warned against with McCarthy's sudden ouster.

"We have a chance today to end that chaos, end that uncertainty," Cole said.

He said that Jordan was not a "shrinking violet" but someone who could lead the House.

Democratic Rep. Pete Aguilar of California nominated Jeffries, noting the Democratic leader continues to win more votes and is the best choice to move the country forward.

"The country cannot afford more delays and more chaos," Aguilar said.

Jordan had relied on backing from Trump, the party's frontrunner in the 2024 election to challenge President Joe Biden, and groups pressuring rank-and-file lawmakers for the vote, but it was not enough.

Flexing their independence, the holdouts are a mix of pragmatists — ranging from seasoned legislators and committee chairs worried about governing,

to newer lawmakers from districts where voters back home prefer President Joe Biden to Trump.

Some Republicans resent being pressured by Jordan's allies and say they are being threatened with primary opponents if they don't support him as speaker. Others are simply upset at the way the whole process has dragged out.

They cast their ballots for McCarthy, Majority Leader Steve Scalise — who had been the party's first nominee to replace McCarthy — and others, one vote even going to the retired Boehner.

"Jim Jordan will be a great speaker," Trump had said Tuesday said outside a courthouse in Manhattan, where he is facing business fraud charges. "I think he's going to have the votes soon, if not today, over the next day or two."

Jordan has been a top Trump ally, particularly during the Jan. 6 Capitol attack by the former president's backers who were trying to overturn the 2020 election he lost to Biden. Days later, Trump awarded Jordan a Medal of Freedom.

The political climb has been steep for Jordan who is known more as a chaos agent than a skilled legislator, raising questions about how he would lead. Congress faces daunting challenges, risking a federal shutdown at home if it fails to fund the government and fielding Biden's requests for aid to help Ukraine and Israel in the wars abroad.

First elected in 2006, Jordan has few bills to his name from his time in office. He also faces questions about his past. Some years ago, Jordan denied allegations from former wrestlers during his time as an assistant wrestling coach at Ohio State University who accused him of knowing about claims they were inappropriately groped by an Ohio doctor. Jordan has said he was never aware of any abuse. □

Suspect admits he murdered Natalee Holloway on Aruba in 2005, pleads guilty to extorting her mom

By **KIM CHANDLER** and **SUDHIN THANAWALA**

Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) —

The chief suspect in the disappearance of Natalee Holloway has admitted he beat the young Alabama woman to death on a beach in Aruba after she refused his advances. New details in the killing emerged Wednesday as Joran van der Sloot pleaded guilty to extorting Holloway's mother, resolving a case that has captivated the public's attention for nearly 20 years. Although van der Sloot isn't charged in Holloway's death, his attempt to squeeze a quarter million dollars from the slain teen's mother gave investigators a crucial link to the 2005 killing. And after finally seeing him in a U.S. courtroom, the family said they're putting years of doubt and uncertainty behind them.

"As far as I'm concerned, it's over," Beth Holloway, Natalee's mother, told reporters outside the federal courthouse in Alabama. "Joran van der Sloot is no longer the suspect in my daughter's murder. He is the killer."

Natalee Holloway went missing during a high school graduation trip with classmates. She was last seen on May 30, 2005, leaving a bar with van der Sloot, a Dutch citizen and student at an international school on the



Beth Holloway, mother of Natalee Holloway, speaks during the opening of the Natalee Holloway Resource Center (NHRC) at the National Museum of Crime & Punishment in Washington, June 8, 2010.

Associated Press

Caribbean island where he grew up. He was questioned in the disappearance but never prosecuted. A judge declared Holloway dead, but her body was never found. Van der Sloot said in his confession that he pushed her body into the sea.

Now 36, he has pleaded guilty to one count each of extortion and wire fraud in exchange for a 20-year sentence. That prison term will run concurrently with a 28-year sentence he's serving in Peru for killing Stephany Flores in 2010.

U.S. Judge Anna Manasco said the details of his confes-

sion factored into her sentencing decision.

"You have brutally murdered — in separate instances years apart — two young women who refused your sexual advances," she said.

Shackled and wearing an orange jail uniform, van der Sloot told the crowded courtroom he hoped the confession provides closure.

"I would like the chance to apologize to the Holloway family, my own family," he said, later adding, "I am no longer the person I was back then."

Mark White, an attorney for Holloway's father Dave Hol-

loway, said it his understanding that van der Sloot could not be prosecuted in Aruba — even with his confession — because the statute of limitations has expired.

The judge said the plea deal required van der Sloot to provide all the information he knew about Natalie Holloway's disappearance, allow her parents to hear in "real time" his discussion with law enforcement, and take a polygraph test.

After the hearing, Beth Holloway told reporters she was "absolutely confident" that they finally got the truth from van der Sloot after years of

lies. Court documents offer a transcript of his confession. In an interview conducted by his attorney, he says he and Holloway were lying on the beach kissing. She started to resist, but he kept touching her, so she kneed him between the legs. He stood up and kicked her "extremely hard" in the face while she was still lying down.

At that point, he said, she was "unconscious, possibly even uh, even dead, but definitely unconscious." He said he picked up a nearby cinderblock and brought it down on her face.

Frightened and unsure what to do, he said he dragged her body until he was knee-deep in the waves, then pushed her out to sea.

The Holloway family has long sought answers about the disappearance, and van der Sloot has given different accounts over the years, at one point saying Holloway was buried in gravel under the foundation of a house but later admitting that was untrue.

Five years after the killing, an FBI sting recorded the extortion attempt in which van der Sloot asked for \$250,000 from Beth Holloway to tell her where to find her daughter's body. He agreed to accept \$25,000 to disclose the location, and asked for the other \$225,000 once the remains were recovered. □



Brandon Wolf, a survivor of the Pulse nightclub shooting and activist, looks at the photos that are a part of the Pulse memorial in Orlando, Fla., on Sept. 9, 2022.

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — The city of Orlando plans to purchase the Pulse nightclub property where 49 people were massacred seven

years ago with the intention of building a memorial for the victims, Mayor Buddy Dyer said Wednesday. A proposal to purchase the

Pulse nightclub property to be purchased by city of Orlando and turned into a memorial

property for \$2 million will be presented before the city council next Monday. If it is approved, the sale will close by the end of the month, Dyer said in a news release.

"In the interest of solving challenges in a way that brings our community together in love, acceptance and partnership, which is the enduring legacy of Pulse, we have decided to purchase the land from its current owners," Dyer said.

"We believe that this is the best and most appropriate way to expedite the creation of a proper memorial for the Pulse tragedy."

The efforts to build a memorial for Pulse victims had been moving ahead in fits and starts since the massacre at the gay nightclub in 2016. Barbara and Rosario Poma and businessman Michael Panaggio have owned the property, and Barbara Poma was the executive director of the

onePulse Foundation — the nonprofit that had been leading efforts to build a memorial and museum. But Barbara Poma stepped down as executive director last year and left the organization entirely earlier this year.

The onePulse Foundation also said earlier this year that it was scaling back from its plans for a large memorial with a \$100 million price tag following fundraising challenges. □

Protesters in Lebanon decrying Gaza hospital blast clash with security forces near U.S. Embassy

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB

Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Hundreds of protesters clashed Wednesday with Lebanese security forces in a Beirut suburb near the U.S. Embassy during demonstrations in support of both Gaza's civilian residents and the militant group Hamas in its war with Israel.

The protest in the Aukar neighborhood came as U.S. President Joe Biden made a show of solidarity with Israel during his visit there Wednesday, a day after an explosion at a Gaza Strip hospital killed hundreds of people and prompted mass protests.

Biden offered his assessment that the explosion was not the result of a strike by the Israeli military. The Palestinian group Hamas, which rules Gaza, and many Arab countries accuse Israel of striking the hospital, while the Israeli military claims it was a misfired rocket from the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group in Gaza. Demonstrators holding Palestinian flags and the flags of various Palestinian factions took down a security wall and cut a barbed wire barrier on a winding road that leads to



Lebanese army soldiers scuffle with protesters during a demonstration, in solidarity with the Palestinian people in Gaza, near the U.S. embassy in Aukar, a northern suburb of Beirut, Lebanon, Wednesday, Oct. 18, 2023.

the U.S. Embassy outside of Beirut. Riot police lobbed dozens of teargas canisters and fired water canons to disperse the protesters, eventually pushing them back. Several protesters were injured.

Meanwhile, in a southern suburb of Beirut, the Hezbollah group, a key ally of Hamas, held its own rally Wednesday. Thousands of Hezbollah supporters

and Palestinians waving Palestinian flags protested against the explosion at the Al-Ahli hospital in Gaza the day before.

"The time has perhaps come for the peoples of the region to declare their word in the face of American tyranny," senior Hezbollah official Hashem Safieddine said in a speech at the rally.

Chanting "death to Amer-

ica," protesters burned an American flag in solidarity with the Palestinians in Gaza, where the violence has left more than 3,000 people dead since Hamas militants launched a surprise attack on Israel on Oct. 7, leaving more than 1,000 people dead or kidnapped.

Hezbollah and Israel have clashed along the Lebanon-Israel border, though

the skirmishes remain mostly contained along a handful of border towns. The militant group announced another death among its ranks Wednesday, its 11th since the conflict began.

Israel has threatened to aggressively retaliate should Hezbollah escalate, while Hezbollah has promised to do the same should Israel decide to launch a ground incursion into Gaza.

As the clashes continue, Saudi Arabia became the latest country to ask its citizens to leave the tiny Mediterranean country of Lebanon. The U.S. State Department warned its citizens not to come and urged those in the country to "make appropriate arrangements to leave," while commercial flights are still available.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Lebanese Red Cross collected the bodies and remains of four slain Hezbollah militants, a spokesperson for the group told The Associated Press.

An Associated Press photojournalist saw the three bodies and bag of remains transferred from the Lebanese Red Cross to Hezbollah's Islamic Health Unit at the Hiram Hospital near the southern city of Tyre. □

Associated Press

Activists turn backs on US officials as UN-backed human rights review of United States wraps up

By JAMEY KEATEN

Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — Dozens of U.S. activists who champion LGBTQ, indigenous, reproductive and other rights and who campaign against discrimination turned their backs Wednesday in a silent protest against what they called insufficient U.S. government responses to their human rights concerns. The protesters, who came from places as diverse as Guam, Puerto Rico, Hawaii and beyond, led the demonstration before the independent Human Rights Committee as U.S. Ambassador Michele Taylor wrapped up a two-day hearing on

the United States. It was part of a regular human rights review for all U.N. member countries by the committee. Six other countries including Haiti, Iran and Venezuela also were undergoing public sessions this autumn in Geneva to see how well countries are adhering to their commitments under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights — one of only a handful of international human rights treaties that the United States has ratified.

The protest came as Taylor said the U.S. commitment to the treaty was "a moral imperative at the very heart of our democracy" and her

country "leads by example through our transparency, our openness and our humble approach to our own human rights challenges."

"You have heard over the past two days about many of the concrete ways we are meeting our obligations under the convention, and you have also heard our pledge to do more," said Taylor, who is U.S. ambassador to the Human Rights Council. "I recognize that the topics raised are often painful for all of us to discuss."

Jamil Dakwar, director of the human rights program at the American Civil Liberties Union, said the U.S. del-



Dozens of U.S. activists who champion LGBTQ, indigenous and reproductive rights and who campaign against discrimination turn their backs in a silent protest against what they called insufficient U.S. government responses to their human rights concerns.

Associated Press

egation "decided to stick to scripted, general, and often meaningless responses" to questions from the committee.

Andrea Guerrero, executive director of community

group Alliance San Diego, said the U.S. responses were "deeply disappointing" and consisted of a simple reiteration, defense and justification of use-of-force standards by U.S. police. □

Fijian prime minister 'more comfortable dealing with traditional friends' like Australia than China

CANBERRA, Australia (AP)

— Fiji's prime minister said Wednesday on a visit to Australia's capital that his government was "more comfortable dealing with traditional friends" such as Australia as China pursues closer security ties in the Asia-Pacific region.

Sitiveni Rabuka and Australia's Anthony Albanese met during the Fijian's first state visit to Australia since he most recently came to power in December last year. The 75-year-old former army colonel and coup leader had previously been Fiji's prime minister from 1992 until 1999.

Rabuka sided with Australia in what he described as the "rivalry" and "one-upmanship" between the United States and China.

"We're more comfortable dealing with traditional friends, that we have similar systems of government, that our democracies are the same brand of democracy, coming out of the Westminster system," Rabuka told reporters.

"Our justice system, our policing system -- we're more comfortable with friends that we have had over a longer period," Rabuka added.

But Rabuka cautioned against countries appearing to be aggressive to-



Fiji's Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka, left, and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese exchange rugby jerseys after a bilateral meeting at Parliament House in Canberra, Wednesday, Oct. 18, 2023.

Associated Press

ward friends and neighbors with whom they had cordial relations.

The two leaders announced several developments in their bilateral relationship including an elevation of the Fiji-Australia Vuvale Partnership, a 2019 agreement on closer cooperation, consultation and friendship.

Australia agreed to sell Fiji 14 Australian-built Bushmaster armored military vehicles and to reach an agreement on cybersecu-

rity cooperation.

Albanese said Australia would provide Fiji with more financial support to help economic recovery after the coronavirus pandemic devastated the country's tourism industry.

Rabuka said Fiji's tourist numbers and tourism income had rebounded to pre-COVID levels, with Australia the largest source of visitors.

Australia and the United States have stepped up their engagement with the

region since last year when China struck a security pact with the Solomon Islands that raised concerns of a Chinese naval base being established in the South Pacific.

China has also proposed a region-wide security and economic deal with Pacific Island nations but several countries have resisted.

Rabuka said he had been "honored" when Albanese phoned him in March to say that Australia, the United States and Britain would

announce in San Diego the following day an agreement on nuclear-powered submarines.

Under the AUKUS agreement, Australia will buy three Virginia-class submarines from the United States and build five new AUKUS-class submarines in cooperation with Britain in response to China's growing influence.

Rabuka said Albanese had called to alert him of the deal "because we're family."

But during a discussion on the AUKUS deal on Tuesday, Rabuka stopped short of endorsing the increased military cooperation.

"I was not part of the planning. I'm in no position to try to stop it. This is a tripartite strategic project," Rabuka said.

"All I can do is hope that this project will assist the concept of the zone of peace in the Pacific," he said.

Rabuka plans to ask that the 18-nation Pacific Islands Forum endorse his zone of peace proposal at a meeting in the Cook Islands in November.

The proposal could include nations refraining from actions that jeopardize regional order and stability while respecting neighbors' sovereignty and territorial integrity, he said. □



Police in riot gear take positions at Constitution Square as clashes develop during a national strike in Guatemala City, Monday, Oct. 9, 2023.

Associated Press

By SONIA PÉREZ D.

Associated Press

GUATEMALA CITY (AP) —

The sudden resignation of a Guatemalan Cabinet

minister appears to signal a division within the administration of President Alejandro Giammattei over how to remove roadblocks by

Guatemala Cabinet minister steps down after criticism for not acting forcefully against protesters

pro-democracy protesters that have stretched into a third week.

Interior Minister Napoleón Barrientos, a retired brigadier general, resigned late Monday following a shooting near one of the roadblocks that killed one person and wounded two others.

Barrientos had said publicly that he preferred to seek dialogue with protesters who have demanded the resignation of Attorney General Consuelo Porras

over her office's investigations into the election victory of President-elect Bernardo Arévalo.

Porras had urged the blockades' immediate removal, with force if necessary. On Monday, hours before Barrientos quit, she had called for him to be fired for not heeding a court order to clear them.

Those responsible for Monday's shooting were not immediately identified, but Barrientos' Interior Ministry condemned the violence

in a statement hours before the government confirmed his resignation.

Barrientos did not comment publicly on his reasons for stepping down and did not respond to requests for comments from The Associated Press.

Days earlier, however, responding to a hypothetical question from a local news outlet about what could lead him to resign his position, Barrientos said that a demand to follow illegal orders would do it. □

The Aruba Tourism Authority honors loyal visitors at Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa!

The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure of recognizing Distinguished Visitors & Emerald Ambassadors of Aruba. These Ambassadors were respectively honored with certificates acknowledging their years of visits, loyalty, and love for the island of Aruba.

The honor certification is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say "Masha Danki" to guests who have visited Aruba 10, 20, or 35 years or more consecutively.

The three honoring levels are as follows:

Distinguished Visitor (10>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
Goodwill Ambassador (20>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
Emerald Ambassador (35>years consecutively visiting Aruba)

The honorees were:
Distinguished Visitors
Mr. Thomas & Mrs. Kay Baxter from New Jersey, United States.

Emerald Ambassadors
Mr. Joseph & Mrs. Carole Forgione from New York, United States.

Ms. Kimberley Richardson

representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and staff members of the Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa bestowed the Distinguished and Emerald Ambassador certificates to the honorees, presented them with gifts, and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination, and as their home away from home.

Top reasons for returning to Aruba, provided by Mr. & Mrs. Baxter were:

- Aruba's warm and friendly people who always treat them like family.
- Aruba's year-round



- sunny weather.
- Aruba's restaurants.
- Aruba's beaches.
- Aruba's safety.

Top reasons for returning to Aruba, provided by Mr. & Mrs. Forgione were:

- Aruba's friendly people.
- Aruba's sunny weather.

- Aruba's beaches.
- Aruba's restaurants.
- "The Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa!"

On behalf of the Aruba Tourism Authority, we would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the honorees for their continued visits to the "One Happy Island" ☐

The Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins and its history



(Oranjestad)—The Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins is one of the most visited places by tourists on the island, as it lies along the northern coast line near the mini pool and on the way to the Natural Bridge. Despite its seemingly plain appearance, this ruin represents one of the most important histories of the island: The Aruban Gold Rush.

Built in 1872 by English company Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd, the gold mill at Bushiribana was constructed in the area where most gold was found by locals. The story of gold on Aruba actually dates back to 1725, when a first exploration for gold on the island was commissioned by the Dutch West India Company. Under the leadership of Mr. Paulus Printz, a three-year search was conducted on Aruba, to no avail. Though they found some gold, it was enough to motivate a further search, and the assignment was discontinued by Printz

himself. It wasn't until 100 years later, in 1824, when a young boy found a lump of gold while out herding his father's sheep. His father took it to a local merchant who then sold the lump for \$70. Unbeknownst to the boy and his father, they quite literally struck gold, and as word got out, a gold fever spread among the locals who started searching for more gold. About 25 pounds worth was found.

At the same time, the Aruban government took immediate actions, and informed Curaçao that gold was found. At first, everyone could look for gold, as long as they sold it to the government. However, after some time, the government decided to implement stricter rules and banned local search parties.

Over the years, concession-holding had seen different companies from around the world, all of which used primi-

tive methods to dig and carve out gold from the rocks. Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd. was no different, but used a unique method that involved grinding the rocks and letting the dust be blown away by the strong northeast

wind, leaving clumps of gold behind. The next step was melting the gold and letting it attach to quicksilver in order to obtain pure gold. All these processes were done at the Bushiribana Gold Mill.

The gold mill itself had a short life-span: only 10 years in service, but its structure remained relatively solid till this day, and is now a historical remnant.

Sources: Etnia Nativa & gold-mineranch.com.



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Papillon: The butterfly effect of magnificent food



PALM BEACH — Do you remember the film “Papillon” starring Steve McQueen? Papillon restaurant is the island’s example where ‘life imitates art.’ The décor, especially the restrooms, was inspired by the movie. For more than a decade this restaurant has built a reputation with the fusion of classic French cuisine, Dutch and Caribbean flavors. Welcome in the world of wonders where ambiance, taste and service come together and you feel you are being welcomed in the home of the owner and her team.

“We find it really important that our guests have fun; can relax while listening to live music while their taste buds are being tickled by France, The Netherlands and the Caribbean. We offer a unique fusion of dishes and a night not to forget,” says owner Tina. As our special guest you can choose to dine inside our heartwarming airconditioned restaurant or

we also offer outside dining on a cozy, elegant terrace with great ambiance of the surroundings. Perfect setting for an enjoyable time people watching while sipping on a delicious cocktail.

Fresh oysters, caviar and wild boar

You are on vacation, life is to enjoy! If you want something special, a different flow than the usual, then Papillon is the place to go. Foodies are in heaven here with classic French dishes such as Foie Gras, Frog Legs, fresh Oysters coming in on a weekly basis from Holland, Escargots, Dover

Sole à la Meunière flown in from Europe and filleted at the table, Duck Breast seared on the skin, roasted and braised Lamb in Balashi beer and slow braised Wild Boar Shank. Do not leave without trying the exclusive recommendation: Caviar! All of this combined with an extensive wine list from around the world makes Papillon a must-do on your Aruban vacation.

Let the music play!

Another reason to visit us is our Live Entertainment Schedule all through the week.

Get all cozy and warmed up on Sundays and Mondays by Marisella and her enchanting acoustic tunes accompanied by percussion only.

On Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, Jairo will give you a real Saxophone treat while on Wednesday you can sit back, relax and enjoy your dinner while DJ Jason brings you the most smooth jazz and lounge music for a dreamy night.

The musicians interact with the guests & requests can be sent in.

The live tunes definitely add to the experience.

Vegetarian vibes present

Impressive vegetarian/vegan dishes are set up especially for the guests by the chef and Meredith from Vegan Aruba. “We offer vegan choices that are really good and tasty. Our

daily soup is always vegan too”. What are you waiting for, make sure to pay a visit to this elegant yet laid-back restaurant while on Aruba. You are most welcome!

Chef’s Garden 6 course dinner by Papillon

Our one of a kind executive chef Juan Ludena gets extra creative outside the kitchen of Papillon Restaurant. Serving a 6 course surprise menu featuring his International flavors and creativity with refined dishes, chef Juan Ludena is determined to give you a night to remember. Wine pairing is optional. The chef’s secret garden is located in a local replica of the Aruba traditional ‘cunucu’ house. The tropical garden is the setting for a magical in-home private dining experience.

For more information about this magnificent option, please send us an email or ask our wait staff.

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Aruba's Nature is to be Cherished



ST. CRUZ — The national park Arikok comprises almost 18 % of the island. Its rugged terrain, desert-like hills filled with tall cacti, breathtaking coastline and protected local flora and fauna welcome you to be explored. There is numerous wildlife to discover like for example the sea turtle who lays his eggs on the park's beaches. There are more places on the island that are a preserved area like the Bubali Plas which is a bird sanctuary.

The national park Arikok takes you on a memorable journey of the islands past offering unique geological, cultural and historical sites. These can all be enjoyed and explored either on your own or during guided tours. A wide variety of educational and informative programs and fun activities is available.

Did you know that four of the in total seven species of sea turtle lay their eggs

on Aruba's beaches? In the national park, a Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*) keeps a strict eye on a very special event taking place below on the beach: a majestic Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) heads back to sea after laying her eggs, while another nest laid 2 months ago by the same female hatches. A very rare occurrence of daytime nesting and hatching. Sea turtles prefer nesting in the cool and dark hours of the night. And hatchlings usually wait for the cue of cooling surface sand before emerging.

Bubali Magic

This beautiful close-up image of the pink bird is courtesy of Michiel Oversteegen of the Aruba Birdlife Conservation. This important foundation showcases and builds awareness of Aruba's birds and other native flora and fauna. You may have seen a 'pink cloud' lately at the Bubali



or Spanish Lagoon Wetlands areas? It's most likely to be Roseate Spoonbills (Ajaia ajaja) or 'Chucharon Cora' as they are known in Papiamentu. This unusual looking bird forages in shallow muddy water while sweeping its flattened bill from side to side to catch small fish, crustaceans and other aquatic invertebrates. The Roseate Spoonbill remains an uncommon sight as they are vulnerable to degradation of feeding and nesting habitats (Wetlands). (Source: arikok national park)

The aforementioned is just a part of what Aruba's nature has to offer. We cannot stress enough to go, see for yourself. The island has the most beautiful beach-

es but it is also worthwhile to go beyond this and get an idea of our entire island. Lately there is a discussion going on about the effect certain activities have on our nature, for example the ATV vehicles cause a lot of dust, noise and leave tire tracks. Animals live in these areas where the vehicles run, often with high speed and with detrimental consequences to flora and fauna. Motorized vehicles are forbidden to drive on the sand dunes in the Northern part of the island and all beaches in Aruba are forbidden for any motorized vehicle. Treasure our island to enjoy it like you do: as a tropical and natural paradise. We truly appreciate it! □



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Episode 69: Native Art



This picture of Native Aruban rock art from Shabururi depicts over a dozen cotton tail rabbits representing children sitting and following the teachings of a Shaman. This particular site lay at somewhat north-west of the town known today as Santa Cruz.

ORANJESTAD — The aboriginal inhabitants' of the Americas art expressions had a distinct cosmic vision compared to what the old world considered as art. Significantly diverse is the inspiration that motivated their expressions which in most cases was

spiritual, envisioning the creative process of their universe. This form of artistic expression in the Americas has been practiced over hundred and even thousands of years. Most expressions were created as symbols, such as rock art depicting

a bear, walrus, eagle, or people. Some scientists even believe that rock art represents ancient space travelers.

On the other hand European style of art was based on realism, on the belief that artists had to carefully observe and depict what they saw. European painters and artists were also more inclined to be recognized for their work. While aboriginal artists and artisans were more inclined to share a message or to record a historic event. Native artists were very skilled in many trends, like gold smith, ceramist, weavers, sculptors and architects. Art in general in the Americas before European colonization

The earliest known painting in North America is the Cooper Bison Skull found near Fort Supply, Oklahoma, dated to 10,200 BCE. In Aruba we can find over 300 early rock art expressions left behind by our ancestors. Some arts were made of stone and others baked out of refined clay

in to ceramic works. Local or native Aruban art consists of powerful cultural symbols that reflect the complexities of societies and its spiritual connection to their tribal cosmology.

Weburi is another very interesting place situated south of Piedra Plat's Protestant Church. This amazing site might be a bit difficult to find since it remoteness, however, once the entrance is located and one has made it inside the hollow rock bolder, the mystical drawings are all over the interior walls.

Today we can find many native artists who are re-discovering ancient techniques that can be applied in their contemporary native inspired work. This is an ideal and a very fine way to keep these ancient techniques and methods alive and to incorporate cultural philosophies into these forms while working with the same cultural accountability, a philosophical tenet that transcends chronology or material but still allows their motive and ambition to be shown.

We would be enchanted to share our island knowledge, considering the status and value of Aruba's archeological and rock formations sites, historical natural monuments, island's endemic flora and fauna. Advocating for a sustainable waste management and mitigate the demographic impact on our natural environment ecosystem in contrast with the calming effect of the surrounding ocean or perhaps the priceless sound of silence.

To get to know more regarding Aruba and its origins, its animals, culture etc. we highly recommend you to book your participation. Living our cultural encounter session is mind opening and entertaining curious hearts for decades. Mail us at etnianativa03@gmail.com. Our facilities and activities take place close to your place. □



Some native artists take great pride in harvesting their own materials, such as clay, earth pigments, or vegetal fibers or dyes to color their weaving work, processing their work using traditional of tribal methods handed down through generations.



Article by: Etnia Nativa

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Short history of the beginnings of baseball in Aruba

ORANJESTAD — Baseball was played on the island of Aruba in the 1930's, but only by United States expatriates working for LAGO and living inside the LAGO colony. Jim Bluejacket, the legendary US Indian who had played in two major league teams, worked for LAGO during 14 years and was a key factor in the growth of the popularity of the game in the colony. There is no record of Bluejacket ever playing outside the colony.

Outside the colony, the game of baseball was introduced to Aruba by Venezuelan immigrants and sailors on the Venezuelan fishing boats that used Aruba as their home port. They formed pick-up teams and played games on Sundays on an open field behind what is now the Court of Justice. One of the Venezuelans that comes to mind is Felix Garrido, grandfather of our current Prime-Minister.

In the late 30s the leader of this group was Raúl Aparicio, a cousin of Luis Aparicio who is now enshrined in the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. The Aparicios were evidently very good at sports. Raúl had two brothers who also played baseball, René and Roman. Rosendo, his only brother who did not play baseball became a professional soccer player in the Venezuelan league. Rosendo was nicknamed "Cabeza de oro" (golden head) for a memorable header he scored to win a game for his team.

Interestingly, it was in Aruba that Luis Aparicio played his first game outside of Venezuela. This took place in 1950 when he played shortstop for the school he attended. Later he played for "Cabimas" in a double-header of the Venezuelan Western League. These official games of the league were authorized to be played in Aruba by the Professional Baseball Organization of Venezuela. Several others who played in those games have also

been enshrined.

Luis Aparicio's father was the super popular Luis "El Grande" (the great one) after whom the baseball stadium in Maracaibo is named. He and his brother owned the professional baseball teams "Gavilanes" which later became the "Aguilas", and the "Cabinmas".

In the early '40s, another group, mostly immigrants from the Dominican Republic also became very active with pickup teams. Some of these remained active in baseball well into the early '50s; as umpires, managers even as players. Among these were Nestor "Pantin" Guerrero who also had a musical band. Perhaps not so coincidentally, many of Pantin's players were also musicians. Luthai Pantophlet who umpired many years was a well-known drummer. Gaston Hazel was a bongo player; José Bryson and the brothers Nicholson, Teddy and Julio, all played several instruments.

In San Nicolas, baseball was played on the grounds next to where the LAGO Sport Park (now Laveist Sport Park) was officially inaugurated in March 1941.

During the WWII years, baseball got a big lift from the influx of Puerto Rican and US soldiers stationed here. As LAGO was playing a very important role in the struggle against Hitler, it was able to get all the sports equipment needed here to allow more people to participate.

In the '40s only the Lago Sports Park organized baseball championship games. The first teams to participate were Artraco, (Aruba Trading Co.), Esso Garage and Botica San Lucas. In 1945 Venezuelan employees of the Lago refinery participated under the name of "Cafenol", a very popular Venezuelan coffee brand. Two other groups of Venezuelan immigrants formed the teams "Cerveceria"



(named after the iconic team Cerveceria Caracas), and "Venezuela", although not all members of these teams were Venezuelans. This was also the year that the team sponsored by Roxy Café started to play as "Dodgers". Dodgers became the dominant baseball powerhouse till the 1950s.

Other teams that entered the baseball scene in the late 1940s: Pepsi Cola (Oranjestad) and St. Thomas Boys (former students of St. Thomas College, Oranjestad). "Baby Ruth" in San Nicolas played initially under the name "Camel" and "Barnes' Ramblers" the only team consisting of Lago Colony players to participate in the Lago Sport Park championships. "Red Rock Cola" was formed in Oranjestad in 1950.

In 1952 the team Pepsi Cola became "Nesbitt's" and had players of seven countries, including two American expats from Lago Colony.

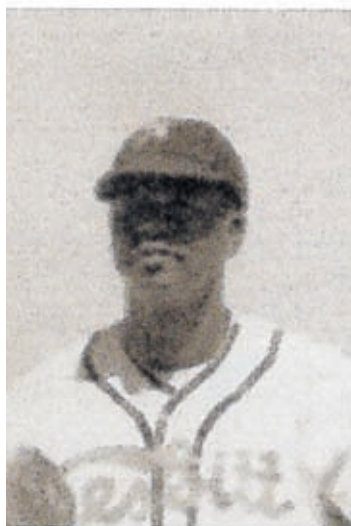
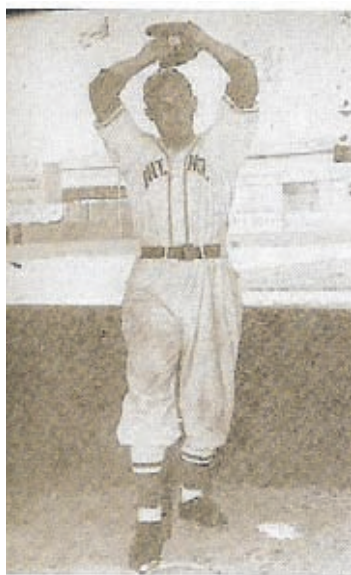
In 1950 a group of prominent members of the Aruba community founded the Amateur Baseball Bond of Aruba (ABBA) to give structure to the management of the sport and became the organizers of official championship games. While maintaining the existing teams in a league that was referred to as A-class, ABBA established a B-class league in which the "Budweiser" and "Braves" played the first years.

By 1952 Aruba became a member of the International Amateur Baseball Association and fielded a team managed by Joe Proterra, (former pitcher of "Barnes'

Ramblers"), that would play for the first time ever in the Amateur Baseball World Series that took place in Havana, Cuba in September. Surprisingly, Aruba won two of its six games and became the darling of the Havana fans. Nell Harms of the Aruban team was named the "Outstanding player of the week" for his performance against Honduras. He allowed just two hits, struck out 15 and hit the only homerun of the game. Joe Cambria, the famous scout for the Washington Senators offered him a contract, but Nel was not interested, but the next year, at the Amateur Baseball World Series in Caracas, Venezuela, Nel and Ruben Phillips did sign and in 1954 they played professional baseball the Georgia-Florida League and the Texas-New Mexico League. They were the first Arubans to play professionally, but not the only ones.

During the games in Havana, contacts were made with the organizers of Little League Baseball in Cuba which eventually resulted in the introduction of Little League in Aruba. Little League of Aruba has been extremely successful: It has produced many players who earned baseball scholarships at universities in the United States, a few who played professionally in the Netherlands and different countries in the Caribbean and five who reached the major leagues: Calvin Maduro, Eugene Kingsale, Radhames Dijkhoff, Sydney Ponson, and Xander Bogaerts one of the brightest stars of Boston Red Sox. □

Written by Mr. Clyde Harms



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 43 Swarm

1 Courts

5 Emmy category

10 Different

11 Like some garages

12 Big Ben, for one

13 Show mercy

14 Old West cemetery

16 Outfit of the late 1930s

20 Fixate

23 Gene messenger

24 Sculptor Henry

25 Brick worker

27 Maximum amount

28 Praline nuts

29 Fizzy quaff

32 Nocturnal noise-makers

36 Old gold coin

39 Money for release

40 Almost never

41 "Diana" singer

42 Story meanies

DOWN

1 "Dragnet" star

2 Toast topper

3 Norway capital

4 Fizzy quaff

5 Resided

6 Bakery buys

7 Perfect serve

8 Fellow

9 Gallery fill

11 Small singing groups

15 Radiator part

A	C	T	S		H	A	Z	E
S	H	E	A	R	T	O	N	E
P	I	N	T	A		O	R	G
I	N	A		C	A	N	N	O
C	A	N	N	E	R		R	O
S	T	A	R	T		F	A	T
	B	S	I	D	E			
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S	P	A		C	A	N	T	A
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O	C	T	E	T		T	H	A
T	H	R	E	E		E	A	T
T	E	A	M			T	E	S

Yesterday's answer

17 Bear in the air

18 Privy to

19 Earth tones

20 Poet Khayyam

21 String tie

22 Concert highlight

25 Come together

26 Circus performer

28 Fragrant flower

30 Low card

31 Seethes

33 Diminish

34 Prefer

35 Close with a bang

36 To's counterpart

37 Fall behind

38 Hockey's Bobby

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9
10					11				
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20	21	22					23		
24					25	26			
27					28				
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			32				33	34	35
36	37	38					39		
40							41		
42							43		

10-19

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's. X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

10-19

CRYPTOQUOTE

MFID YB WFJ AMDCD EFR

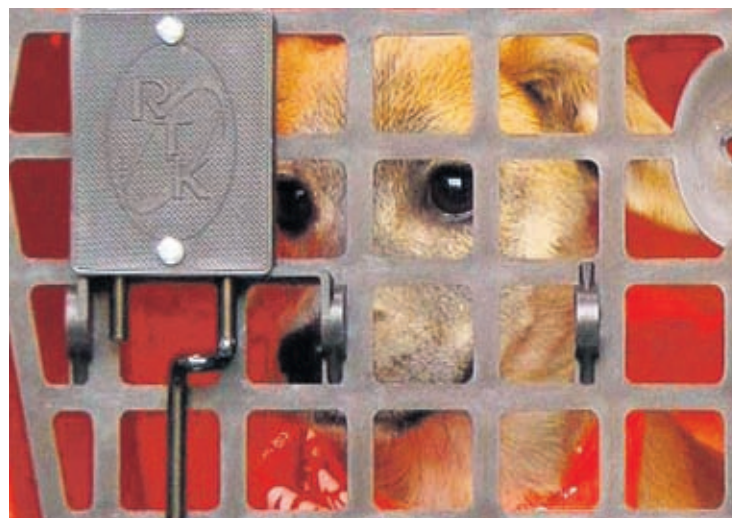
ADCD KFCW; MFID YB AMDCD

XNN EFRC XJJDIGJB JF DBUXGD

BJFG. — WXORYK IXMZFRQ

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: MEMORY IS A COMPLICATED THING, A RELATIVE TO TRUTH, BUT NOT ITS TWIN — RARRARA KINGSMAN

Adopting a rescue dog? Here's what to know about pet insurance



A stray puppy named Apple sits in a crate on a truck awaiting a journey to New York City on Wednesday, April 3, 2019, in Starkville, Miss.

Associated Press

By SARAH SCHLICHTER of NerdWallet

Adopting a rescue or shelter dog doesn't just give a needy animal a home. It can provide a playmate for your kids, a jogging buddy for you and a loyal companion for everyone to cuddle with on the couch. But a new pet can also come with unexpected vet bills, which is why you might want to consider pet insurance.

Pet insurance policies can help pay for treatment if your furry friend gets sick or hurt. In some cases, they may also cover vaccinations and other routine care. Here's how to decide whether pet insurance is right for your rescue dog.

ESTIMATE THE COST OF VET CARE

It's impossible to know which medical problems a given pet may have in the future. However, researching the breeds you're interested in can help you get a sense of which health conditions are most likely to crop up, says Dr. Antonio DeMarco, chief medical officer at GoodVets, a

chain of animal hospitals with locations across the U.S. Some of these conditions can be both serious and expensive to treat, he says.

For example, large-breed dogs like golden and Labrador retrievers are prone to hip dysplasia, a deformity of the hip joint. Some dogs may need surgery to treat it, costing thousands of dollars.

A local vet can advise you on potential health concerns and how much it might cost to manage them. They can also help you estimate the price of routine care.

UNDERSTAND PET INSURANCE

Pet insurance likely won't reimburse every dollar you spend at the vet. For example, most plans won't cover pre-existing conditions that your dog had before you bought the policy. So if you adopt a senior dog with diabetes, you'll need to pay for the treatment yourself. For the same reason, you can't simply wait to get a policy until your vet diagnoses an injury or illness. De-

Marco has had pet owners ask him if they can buy insurance after their dog tears an ACL. "(You) sure can, but this isn't covered," he tells them.

Most pet insurance plans pay to treat illnesses and injuries but won't help with routine care unless you buy extra coverage. That coverage may be worth adding for certain dogs, says Maureen Sosa, director of pet support at the Humane Rescue Alliance in Washington, D.C. Smaller dogs are more prone to dental disease and benefit from regular cleanings, which wellness plans can help pay for. When shopping for pet insurance, check for deductibles and co-pays. Say your plan will pay 80% of your expenses after you've met the \$500 annual deductible. That means you'd have to spend \$500 on your pet's treatment in a given year before your plan would start reimbursing you.

Your policy may also have a maximum payout limit, such as \$5,000 or \$10,000 per year.

GET PET INSURANCE QUOTES

The average cost of accident and illness coverage for a dog is about \$640 per year, according to the North American Pet Health Insurance Association. However, you might pay more or less depending on where you live, the coverage options you choose and the breed and age of your dog.

You can get online quotes from most pet insurance providers. Check rates from at least three companies to make sure you're getting the best price for the coverage you want.

Pet insurance isn't worth the cost for every rescue dog. Policies may be prohibitively expensive for older dogs, especially if they already have chronic conditions that the policy won't cover. In these cases, you may be better off skipping insurance and setting up an emergency fund for vet expenses. □

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24/7

People of African ancestry are poorly represented in genetic studies

By LAURA UNGAR
AP Science Writer

Scientists are setting out to collect genetic material from 500,000 people of African ancestry to create what they believe will be the world's largest database of genomic information from the population. The hope is to build a new "reference genome" — a template to compare to full sets of DNA from individuals — and better understand genetic variants that affect Black people. It could eventually translate into new medicines and diagnostic tests — and help reduce health disparities. The initiative was launched Wednesday by Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee, as well as Regeneron Genetics Center, AstraZeneca, Novo Nordisk and Roche. The pharmaceutical companies are providing the funding, while the data will be managed by a nonprofit started by Meharry, called the Diaspora Human Genomics Institute. Organizers said there's a clear need for the project, pointing to research showing that less than 2% of genetic information being studied today comes from people of African ancestry. "We are going to bridge that gap, and this is just

the beginning," said Anil Shanker, senior vice president for research and innovation at Meharry. Scientists have long known that the reference they compare to individual genomes has serious limits because it mostly relies on genetic material from one man and doesn't reflect the spectrum of human diversity. Although any two people's genomes — that is, a set of instructions to build and sustain a human being — are more than 99% identical, scientists say they want to understand the differences. The project is not connected with related research already underway. In May, scientists published four studies about building a diverse reference genome that they call a "pangenome." At that point, it included the genetic material of 24 people of African ancestry, 16 from the Americas and the Caribbean, six from Asia and one from Europe. In the new project, Meharry, a historically Black academic health sciences center, will recruit patients from the Nashville area to donate blood, then send it to the Regeneron Genetics Center, which will do the genetic sequencing for



This undated image made available by the National Human Genome Research Institute shows the output from a DNA sequencer.

Associated Press

free. Other historically Black colleges and universities in the U.S., and the University of Zambia in Africa, will also recruit volunteers. Project organizers said they are also open to working with other universities in Africa, as well as medical centers and health departments there. Organizers expect enrollment to take about five years. All information will be kept anonymous. After the genetic sequencing, the data will go into a repository at the Diaspora Human Genomics Institute, and the database will be provided exclusively to HBCUs and the institutions involved in Africa. Outside

researchers can access the information through those institutions. □

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Britney Spears writes of abortion while dating Justin Timberlake in excerpts from upcoming memoir

By The Associated Press

Britney Spears wrote that she had an abortion while dating Justin Timberlake more than 20 years ago, according to a peek inside her hotly anticipated memoir.

"If it had been left up to me alone, I never would have done it," she writes of the procedure, according to the excerpt from "The Woman in Me" published Tuesday in People magazine. "And yet Justin was so sure that he didn't want to be a father."

The pregnancy "was a surprise, but for me, it wasn't a tragedy," she wrote in the excerpt, saying that she had wanted to start a family with Timberlake — it was just earlier than expected. "But Justin definitely wasn't happy about the pregnancy. He said we weren't ready to have a baby in our lives, that we were way too young," she wrote. The couple broke up in 2002. It's unclear when the pregnancy happened.

Representatives for Spears declined to offer further comment. Representatives for Timberlake did not respond to requests for comment from The Associated



Britney Spears, left, and Justin Timberlake arrive at the 28th Annual American Music Awards in Los Angeles on Jan. 8, 2001. Spears' memoir "The Woman in Me" releases Oct. 24.

Associated Press

Press. The AP has not been able to independently review a copy of the "The Woman in Me" yet.

Spears, a prolific user of social media, has not posted to Instagram or X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, since the People stories were published.

In the excerpt published in People, she characterized the abortion as "one of the most agonizing things I have ever experienced in my life." Spears' long-awaited memoir will be published Oct. 24, just months after her divorce from Sam Asghari was announced and promising to shed light on the 41-year-old's tumultuous decades in the spotlight.

"**NO ONE KNOWS WHAT I REALLY THOUGHT ... UNTIL NOW,**" reads a teaser for the book she posted Sunday. The audiobook will be narrated by actor Michelle Williams.

Hailing from Kentwood, Louisiana, Spears rose to fame as a tween on "The Mickey

Mouse Club," alongside other future stars like Ryan Gosling and Timberlake — a trajectory chronicled in other excerpts published by People.

Despite some further attempts at acting — in the People excerpts, she says the lead in "The Notebook" came down to her and Rachel McAdams and that she was relieved when 2002's "Crossroads" was "was pretty much the beginning and end of my acting career" — she found indelible stardom with her music career, starting with 1999's "...Baby One More Time."

She had two sons with Kevin Federline, but was placed under a court-ordered conservatorship — mostly under the supervision of her father — that controlled her life, money and voice after public breakdowns. That conservatorship would last nearly 14 years, ending in late 2021, after a swelling #FreeBritney movement that helped secure new limits on conservatorships in California.

Many of Spears' allegations against her father and others who operated the conservatorship are expected

to be heard in a civil trial scheduled for next year.

A 2021 documentary, "Framing Britney Spears," included an old interview in which Timberlake spoke of sleeping with a former girlfriend and indicated he ridiculed her in his "Cry Me A River" music video. That sparked a backlash in which fans accused the former NSYNC member of contributing to Spears' breakdown and also renewed ire about his role in Janet Jackson's so-called wardrobe malfunction during the 2004 Super Bowl halftime show. Subsequently, he apologized to Spears and Jackson "because I care for and respect these women and I know I failed." A few months later, as Spears revealed long-guarded secrets about what she described as an "abusive" conservatorship in court, Timberlake tweeted his support.

"After what we saw today, we should all be supporting Britney at this time," he posted in June 2021. "Regardless of our past, good and bad, and no matter how long ago it was... what's happening to her is just not right." □



This cover image released by Crown Publishing shows "The Demon of Unrest: A Saga of Hubris, Heartbreak, and Heroism at the Dawn of the Civil War" by Erik Larson.

Associated Press

Erik Larson's next book closely tracks the months leading up to the Civil War

By HILLEL ITALIE
AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The next book by Erik Larson, widely known for the best-selling "The Devil in the White City," is a work of Civil War history inspired in part by current events. Crown announced Wednesday that Larson's "The Demon of Unrest: A Saga of Hubris, Heartbreak, and Heroism at the Dawn of the Civil War" will come out April 30. Larson sets his narrative over a short but momentous time span, from Abraham Lincoln's election in 1860 to the firing on Fort Sumter five months later. During a recent telephone interview, Larson said he was initially inspired by his reading of historical documents and how he could weave them into a "tick-tock" chronology of the country's fracturing and descent into armed

conflict, driven by "the human element — the hubris, the personalities, the ambitions, the egos."

"And then comes January 6," he added, referring to the 2021 siege of the U.S. Capitol by supporters of President Donald Trump. "I have to tell you, it was the weirdest thing watching this unfold on TV, because the documents I was going through could have been written today. Lincoln's primary concern had been about whether the electoral vote count would be disturbed, and then came the grave concern about the inauguration. It all has very contemporary resonance."

Larson's book will also feature such historical figures as Major Robert Anderson, the Union commander of Fort Sumter and a former slave holder who found himself battling

Confederate forces; Virginia planter Edmund Ruffin, an impassioned and influential backer of secession; and the diarist Mary Boykin Chesnut, wife of a prominent South Carolina lawyer and politician who became a brigadier general in the Confederate Army.

"Drawing on diaries, secret communiques, slave ledgers, and plantation records, Larson gives us a political horror story that captures the forces that led America to the brink — a dark reminder that we often don't see a cataclysm coming until it's too late," Crown's announcement reads in part.

Besides "The Devil in the White City," based in Chicago during the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, Larson's books include "The Splendid and the Vile," "Dead Wake" and "Isaac's Storm." □

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell says league still needs to improve minority head coach hirings

By **ROB MAADDI**

AP Pro Football Writer

NEW YORK (AP)—NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said the league still needs to improve its minority hiring among head coaches. The latest rule change was aimed at increasing opportunities.

Owners voted Tuesday to push in-person head coaching interviews back one more week until after all divisional playoff games have been completed to slow down the hiring process.

"(Diversity, equity, inclusion) has received more attention in our owners' meetings than probably any subject we have been discussing in the last five years, and I think that focus has been helpful to the clubs as well as to all of us," Goodell said Wednesday after the conclusion of the league's fall meetings. "Our understanding of the priorities, the need to do this and how we do it better. I know the focus is on head coaches, we understand that, but we're focused on the entire league. How do we continue to have diversity be a part of our league and make us better?"

"And we reported on the broader diversity numbers



NFL football commissioner Roger Goodell speaks to the media during league meetings Wednesday, Oct. 18, 2023, in New York.

Associated Press

both at the league level and the club level and there is significant progress. But, when you say frustration, I'm probably always frustrated by the pace of progress. Right? It's never enough for yours truly. So, we obviously know we have work to do here, and the clubs are very focused on this, and it has to be a sustainable change, and I think that's where the ownership is."

NFL executive Dasha Smith

said the league office and the 32 teams are 50% diverse. There are six minority head coaches, including three Black men. The goal of pushing the in-person interviews back one week is to create more opportunities for candidates.

"We feel like that is a big step forward and, again, enhances our hiring process and that starts obviously this hiring cycle," league executive Jonathan Beane said.

BRADY WAITS

Colts owner Jim Irsay said there was no conversation at the meetings about approving Tom Brady's offer to purchase a percentage of the Las Vegas Raiders. Brady already is a part-owner of the WNBA's Las Vegas Aces, who are also owned by Mark Davis. Brady reportedly has received a discounted purchase price to buy into the Raiders.

"The number just had to be

a reasonable number for purchase price," said Irsay, who is a member of the finance committee that would approve the deal.

The NFL created a special committee on ownership policy several months ago to oversee these matters. Goodell said they've met five times in the past 45 days.

"They've been hard at work," Goodell said. "We want our ownership policies to be good for the owners that are in our league, for attracting new owners, particularly the diversity issue. And also, we've mentioned it before, former players who want to invest in our league. I think all of that is a positive thing for us. So, it's just a balancing act. I hope that they'll make recommendations by the March meeting so that we can act on that either at the March meeting or in the spring meeting."

GAMBLING POLICY

The league recently changed its gambling policy to increase the penalty for betting on the NFL and decreased it for betting on other sports. The league also reduced suspensions for several players, including Lions wide receiver Jameson Williams. □

NBA considering changes to All-Star Game format, with East vs. West possible again

By **TIM REYNOLDS**

AP Basketball Writer

The NBA All-Star Game may soon return to an East vs. West format.

Commissioner Adam Silver said Tuesday in a televised interview on ESPN that changes are coming to the All-Star Game — and while stopping short of saying any decision has been finalized, he hinted that the current format of top vote-getters serving as captains and drafting their own teams may be shelved.

"Maybe a return to something more traditional, in terms of how the teams are presented," Silver said in

the interview on ESPN's "First Take" program. "We went to sort of this captain-draft notion, but clearly, historically, it was East vs. West, so that's something we are looking at."

This season's All-Star Game is at Indianapolis on Feb. 18. The league has not yet announced any format changes.

The first 66 All-Star Games all had the East vs. West format. The last six have seen the leading vote-getters from each conference serve as captains who got to draft their teams; LeBron James served as one of the captains all six times, with

Giannis Antetokounmpo the other captain three times, Kevin Durant twice and Stephen Curry once.

The last four All-Star Games have used a target score at the end of games, ensuring that the matchup ends on a made shot. Fourth quarters have been untimed; the winner is the first team to reach whatever the leading team had after three quarters, plus 24 points — the 24 is a nod to Kobe Bryant's last jersey number.

"I mean, it's fun to kind of get out there and do some dunks and stuff like that," Utah's Lauri Markkanen said



Los Angeles Lakers forwards Anthony Davis, left, and LeBron James watch from the bench during the first half of the team's preseason NBA basketball game against the Sacramento Kings on Wednesday, Oct. 11, 2023, in Anaheim, Calif.

Associated Press

after last season's All-Star Game. "But we're all competitors. I think everybody would enjoy too if we just play against each other and it gets competitive."

League officials said last week that they have been stressing to players the im-

portance of improving the quality of the All-Star Game. It has been a talking point for years, as has the slam dunk competition — which got a serious shot in the arm last season when Mac McClung put on a show for the ages. □

Evan Carter, Corbin Carroll and MLB's precocious rookie class unfazed by pressure-packed playoffs

By **DAVID BRANDT**
AP Baseball Writer

Johan Rojas dashed toward the warning track in a crucial October moment, sized up the hard-hit ball that was hurtling toward the fence and made a leaping catch before crashing into the wall as the crowd at Citizens Bank Park roared in approval.

Not bad for a guy who's been in the big leagues for about three months.

The Philadelphia Phillies' defensive wizard is among a handful of rookies who have made a huge impact in baseball's postseason, joining Arizona Diamondbacks outfielder Corbin Carroll and Texas Rangers standouts Evan Carter and



Philadelphia Phillies' Johan Rojas is congratulated by Brandon Marsh (16) after catching a long fly ball hit by Atlanta Braves' Ronald Acuna Jr. during the seventh inning of Game 4 of a baseball NL Division Series Thursday, Oct. 12, 2023, in Philadelphia.

Associated Press

Josh Jung. The youthful regular seasons for rookie playoff infusion is the continuation of one of the best hitters in MLB history. There have been 19 rook-

ies with at least one plate appearance this postseason through Tuesday, and that group was hitting a combined .238 with a .789 OPS. Five rookies — Carter, Carroll, Baltimore's Gunnar Henderson and Minnesota's Royce Lewis and Edouard Julien — had OPS totals over 1.000, and Jung wasn't far behind at .947. The postseason average for all players was .712.

And it's just the latest example of first-year players taking October by storm. Two of the last three ALCS MVPs — Randy Arozarena in 2020 and Jeremy Peña in 2022 — were rookies. Peña also won World Series MVP. The 23-year-old Rojas is known more for his glove

that his bat, and his catch of a Ronald Acuña Jr. smash preserved a 3-1 lead for the Phillies in Game 4 of the NL Division Series on Oct. 12, helping them beat the Braves and advance to the NLCS.

"This kid is so poised," Phillies manager Rob Thomson said. "He's so good of an athlete, electric in the outfield. I felt like he was going to catch it."

"So he's been a huge addition to our ballclub. He really has, even if he doesn't do anything at the plate. And he's had decent at-bats. But if he does nothing at the plate, just his defense helps the club."

Arizona's Carroll, who is also 23, is among the leading candidates for NL Rookie of the Year after swatting 25 homers and stealing 54 bases. The All-Star hasn't been fazed by his first appearance in the postseason, batting .333 with two homers, two stolen bases and six walks through seven games.

He helped the surprising D-backs sweep the 100-win Los Angeles Dodgers in the NL Division Series and advance to the NLCS, which is the deepest the franchise has played into the postseason since 2007.

"I'd say adrenaline-wise, it's probably felt about the same as the regular season, maybe a tiny bit more," Carroll said. "For whatever reason I wouldn't say I've gotten too amped up."

They'll almost certainly need some more Carroll heroics if they're going to advance to the World Series.

The Phillies have a 2-0 lead over the D-backs in the NLCS after a 10-0 win Tuesday night.

Then there's Jung and Carter, who have helped make the Rangers' lineup among the deepest in baseball. The 25-year-old Jung was among the leading candidates for AL Rookie of the Year before a fractured left thumb in early August caused him to miss several weeks. □



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